

# Nightmares of Moonlight

by Ganurath

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Summary: There is something akin to strength to be found in desperation, in that small place between panic in the face of an enormous difficulty and the hope of overcoming it. To know the horrors that lurk in the future of the shinobi world is enough to make a young man truly desperate. SI

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*Disclaimer:\*\*** If you think Naruto belongs to anyone with an account on this website, I have a bridge in the Land of Grass I'd like to sell you.

I had never expected to be reborn into the world of Naruto, but apparently that was what happened. It took me a while to figure out where I was, but the reincarnation thing was relatively easy to puzzle out.

The dividing line between the mind and the soul, and the existence of the later, was a matter of frequent discussion in certain circles, a few of which I participated in. I was skeptical of the soul's existence, due to the consequences of brain damage and similar such matters and how that impacted an individual's identity. Some held my position for the same reasons, some for different reasons, and many others held fast to the belief in the existence of the soul. According to those I had spoken with in the last group, what happened to the mind wouldn't impact what happened to the soul.

As it turns out, we were all wrong.

There's a part of the brain that converts short-term memory into long-term memory. I knew the term "hippocampus" was somehow relevant to the process, but I couldn't remember for the life of me (either of them) if that was the section of the brain that performed the conversion or a chemical it used to do so. If that part of the brain is nonfunctional, though, no memory I had was going to last longer

than a few minutes.

This particular piece of trivia was relevant to the process of reincarnation for two reasons. First, it meant that I couldn't remember how I my first life had ended. One could argue that it was a mercy, but it did make the transition uncomfortably abrupt would be the best term. It had just been a stressful day at work, and then suddenly I was dead for some reason.

Second, though, it made the baby years weird. Not as weird as they would have been, but it was still an odd experience. There was a vague sense of consciousness, the steady indoctrination of new information, and then suddenly I was a toddler in a world that was simultaneously new and familiar. It was like I had a really vivid dream, and woke up on the wrong end of reality.

The new information consisted mostly of a new language, which subsequently made it difficult to think of my old life. My memories were in English, but my thoughts were in Japanese, and since one hadn't been used to help me learn the other translation was particularly difficult. It felt like my brain was full to bursting, too, so eventually I stopped trying to remember anything more than images and what little of my experience was in Japanese. Some manga here, some martial arts there, it was enough to remember home by since my friends and family were both active in the latter.

I don't want to say I got over losing them easily, but I'd say I handled it easier than most. It probably helped that I had had a mental disorder in my previous life that, among other attributes, made it so that I became rather attached to whatever status quo my life had, with whatever lumps it brought. For me, the comfort of routine was particularly comfortable. So, while I missed the friends and family of my old life, my thoughts were too focused on the day to day of my new life to pay the matter any mind beyond the odd bout of tears at night.

Likely not the healthiest mental state, but it was what it was.

My new life had provided a fulfilling environment to live in, even if it had been a bit primitive compared to what I was used to. For the most part, it had seemed like a stereotypical Japanese farming community. I'd had loving parents, an older brother, a baby sister, and a family dog that was huge. If I still had an adult body, Shita would've been bigger than a horse, in terms of relative scale. I'd been lucky that he was such a sweet dog. My brother had been less than sweet, though. Apparently, I'd cried a lot as a baby, so he didn't like me as much as a big brother ought to. That is to say, he'd given me a hard time whenever our parents weren't watching, generally calling me words that probably would've been hurtful if I knew what they meant. It hadn't been until I started doing magic tricks that he finally began to warm up to me.

Well, he'd thought of them as magic tricks. It took a while before I had figured out what was actually going on. All throughout this life, I could feel a sort of energy in pretty much everything. It was probably something I had figured that everyone else was used to feeling, assuming they felt it at all, but for me? It was something new, different, and ultimately unknown.

There was no way that I could not experiment.

I'd started out by making puffs of air that I would shoot out of my hand. I had managed about two or three a day, both in terms of having the time unsupervised to focus on the task and in terms of physical stamina. Manipulating the air was exhausting, and compound that on helping out with chores around the farm— well, it was only a matter of time until I got sloppy. Luckily for me, my brother was the only one who'd found out.

The reason he was the only one to find out, though, was less fortunate. As it turned out, the farming community I'd grown up on was part of a militarily overextended nation whose neighbors had enough combatants to spare for supply raids. So, when our farms were harvesting crops a couple months after my brother had found me out— it wasn't an event I liked the idea of reflecting upon. The aftermath, however, was the most important part of my life.

I'd been walking away from— what had happened, hoping to find some sign that I hadn't been the only survivor. Unfortunately, I hadn't been able to see, hear, or sense anyone. Well, until a soft and drawling voice spoke up from right behind me.

"You did well, to survive as you have." My entire body had gone rigid in panic, and I'd looked over my shoulder to see— that nobody was there. I'd thought my mind was playing tricks on me, so I sighed and turned my focus back in front of holyshithe'srightthere! "Did you see who attacked your village?"

I'd seen, although I hadn't recognized the symbol that identified the attackers until I saw the man in front of me. That the recognition had only come to me then hadn't prevented me from using my finger to draw the symbol of Kumo's forehead protector in the dirt for Orochimaru, who was wearing a black cloak with red clouds on it.

"I suspected as much, but it's good to have someone who saw the attack who can describe what happened to your daimyo." It had taken me a second to process that, and I'd looked up at Orochimaru once I figured it out. Judging by the look on his face, I'd been able to quickly determine that I was terrible at reading faces beyond picking up on his mild amusement. "Tell me, child. Would you like to tell the daimyo what happened here? It would help to convince him to take steps against this from happening again."

I should've just quietly agreed. Asking questions about the future wasn't the sort of thing a child my age was supposed to do. At least, I didn't think so. I wasn't so confident that I'd bet my life on it, that much was certain. So why did I do just that? "What'll happen to me after I tell the daimyo what happened?"

Orochimaru had smiled and, after seeing me cringe, gently patted me on the head. "If he decides to listen to my advice, you'll never be helpless again."

The implication behind that promise was that I was going to be trained as a ninja. It wasn't an implication he could've reasonably expected me to pick up on, but I was more informed than he'd known. It was a matter I'd felt conflicted about. On one hand, ninja training would involve hard work, and Orochimaru wasn't the sort who coddled his subordinates. On the other hand—

On the other hand, I couldn't be helpless. Not after what had just happened. Not with everything I knew was coming. I'd nodded; having made up my mind, and let Orochimaru lead me to wherever it was that he'd wanted me to go.

As it turned out, being a minion for Orochimaru was a learning experience.

Which was good, because I didn't want to get trapped in a global illusion, and I needed every advantage I could muster to stop that from happening.

## 2. Chapter 2

The walk to wherever the daimyo kept his court had promised to be a long one, so Orochimaru had decided to assess my aptitude for general knowledge, physical fitness, and chakra manipulation in order to pass the time. I didn't trust myself to be able to fool him about my being more intelligent than the average—however old I was. So, I showed off that I was a physically fit and abnormally intuitive young boy whose only real downside was a lack of literacy.

My attempt to demonstrate my capacity for chakra manipulation hadn't had the desired effect, though. He'd narrowed his eyes as I stirred the air, and after a sharp intake of breath he'd knelt next to me and grasped my hands. I'd felt him use—some sort of energy to reach inside my hands, but whatever it did made him relax a bit.

"Sakebi, was it?" I'd nodded, because that was the name I'd been called the few times I wasn't child, son, or brat. It had, surprisingly, been the first thing he asked me when the questions had started. "I need you to listen very carefully. That energy that you used to make wind is not chakra."

"—What?"

"It's called shizen energy." One of the issues with growing up in a world with an unfamiliar language was that I had to rebuild my vocabulary all over again. Spending time with Orochimaru helped, though. "If you get too much of it inside you, you'll start to turn into a snake, or a statue."

And that was when I remembered natural energy. The surprise and fear must have shown on my face, because Orochimaru had been quick to redirect the conversation toward how to use my own chakra without tapping into the stupidly dangerous energies that were all around us. It wasn't until I'd shown the ability to safely do so that he'd begun asking about how I was aware of natural energy. At that point, he'd been much more pleasantly surprised by just how sensitive of a sensor I was, to be able to pick up on the stuff. The rest of the journey to the daimyo's court had been focused on gauging the range and precision of my senses, and honing them so that I able to use my sensory ability more effectively.

Once we arrived in the city I could only assume was the capitol of whatever country I'd been living in, though—I was instructed. A bit of it was advice on how to be properly respectful of nobility, but most of what he'd had to say consisted of recommendations on how to act like a normal child. Hopefully, that was nothing more than him

acknowledging that I seemed to be a genius, rather than an adult in the body of a child.

As it turned out, though, all I'd really needed to know was that I should address everyone as a 'sama' and wait until I was addressed to speak. Which, thanks to the daimyo being the sort that encouraged his courtiers to speak freelyâ€¦ meant I'd been standing in a room full of fat, perfumed men in fancy outfits for at least an hour after I told them about the attack on my village.

On the bright side, I was learning new words.

One of the more vocal critics of Orochimaru's proposal to form a ninja village for the country was a bird-nosed man named Shitozei. He appealed to those who hated shinobi more than fearing them and those who were proud of their station by insulting Orochimaru and I, respectively. His actual talking points, however, focused on a single issue. "So, even by the most generous estimates provided by my esteemed peers, it would be more costly to fund this shinobi village than to replace what was lost in the attack."

"My advisor raises a valid concern." The daimyo, Hokori-sama, smiled to himself. He had a tendency to agree with the last person to spoke, but I wasn't sure if it was an act or if he was just that easy to manipulate. Now, though, he looked toward where Orochimaru was standing behind me. "Unless there are financial factors that haven't been given proper consideration?"

A question had been addressed in my general direction, which gave me an excuse to speak. This was good, because I'd been bored and annoyed for a while now. "Hokori-sama, I didn't hear anything in that costâ€¦ summary? I didn't hear anything about bringing my little sister back from the dead."

The daimyo's eyebrows shot up at that. "Back from the dead?"

"He said 'replace what was lost in the attack.'" I made sure to stick my nose in the air when I impersonated Shitozei's voice. I heard chuckles from a couple of courtiers, and saw the beginnings of a smile on the daimyo's face as well. "The lives of my family and neighbors were lost. I figured if he was considering the costs of everything, he would've included the cost of putting my baby sister back together after the house she was inside, my house, exploded when-"

A hand rested on my shoulder, and I looked up and behind me at Orochimaru. He wasn't wearing the Akatsuki robe at the moment, favoring a pinkâ€¦ whatever the male equivalent of a kimono was. His expression was somewhere between approving and reassuring, but it was hard to tell because there was something in my eye.

As I took a moment to get it out, I heard Shitozei speak up again. "It would not cost much to encourage new families to move into the rebuilt community in order to work the farms, if it would cost anything at all. I suppose the brat's survival does create the irritation of an orphan running aroundâ€¦"

Wow. Fuck you, bird nose. I didn't need to fake the shock on my face as I looked toward the daimyo for a reaction. "Hokori-sama?"

Out of the corner of my eye, Shitozei bristled. "You dare interrupt-"

"Shitozei." The daimyo didn't use any honorific to address him. That, coupled with a tone of voice that sounded almost venomous, told me that I'd scored a win. It seemed that the daimyo hadn't been waffling due to being easily manipulated. "Sakebi-kun is a guest in my court, not an irritation. At least, he is no more of an irritation than you are."

"â€|Y-yes, Hokori-sama."

"He raises a valid concern, as well. There is a price in the lives of my people to be considered, lives that aren't so easily replaced as some might believe."

A particularly fat courtier, who I'd pegged as being more fearful of shinobi than hateful, nodded in agreement. "Future attacks would mean more dead civilians, too. The danger that these shinobi from the Land of Lightning represent can't be dismissed."

Hokori nodded, a smile coming to his face. "Orochimaru-dono, how do you plan to maintain the population of this hidden village you propose?"

"I understand that there are several shinobi clans that have been living in your land since before the Hidden Village system was established." Orochimaru placed a hand on my shoulder, and I looked up at him. He had looked down toward me, and was smiling with surprising warmth. It was getting harder and harder to reconcile the man who'd saved me from the Kumo-nin with the murderous traitor from my past memories. "These clans, coupled with the orphans of your land and nuke-nin from other lands, will be enough to populate your forces."

One of the greedier courtiers I hadn't caught the name of spoke up. "I heard rumor from some merchants that the Land of Water was considering a cessation of the bloodline purges. Would you still be able to acquire bloodline shinobi, if such were to occur?"

"Even if the rumors are true, the shinobi in question would not forget being hunted." There was a faint undertone of excitement in Orochimaru's voice. It wasn't surprising, considering that the guy had a murder boner for new jutsu. He went on to say some stuff about the political climate that, due to my limited vocabulary, went over my head. From there, the discussion went on, but the dialogue had shifted from whether or not there would be a hidden village to figuring out how the hidden village would work. Apparently, my interjection had swung us a win.

â€|I was thinking of Orochimaru and I as 'us.' That was a very dangerous line of thought.

"If a decision has been made," I glanced toward Shitozei, who'd decided to speak up again, "I'm curious as to whether or not the orphans will have any choice in whether or not they become a shinobi."

Alright, that was a big shift from his previous position of being dismissive toward me. Apparently, this guy was going to say whatever

it took to hinder the formation of a hidden village in the area. At this point, it was crossing the line between 'annoying' and 'suspicious.'

I looked toward the daimyo to gauge his reaction to Shitozei's shift in position, but he just looked at me expectantly. Ah, right. I was an orphan now. I'd been trying not to think about that. "I want to be a shinobi, Hokori-sama."

"Food, clothing, equipment, and residence for your shinobi were all included in the estimated expenses, Hokori-sama." Orochimaru's hand was on my shoulder again, and the tension left my shoulders that I hadn't known had been there. It was tricky, standing properly at attention while bored out of my mind. "Sakebi-kun will not be the only orphan in your land eager to receive training."

The discussion went on for a bit after that, focused mainly on what the training would involve. Well, it sounded like it any way. Words for children and various measures of time came up a lot. Once that was wrapped up, though, Hokori waved his hand dismissively. "I expect to hear great things of our shinobi, Orochimaru-dono."

I heard Orochimaru shift to bow behind me, and a touch of his hand on the small of my back prompted me to do the same. It was a prearranged signal, as was his removal of the hand indicating that I should stop bowing. Once we were both upright, Orochimaru spoke with a smile in his voice. "I have full confidence that they'll surpass your wildest expectations."

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><p>The education system that Orochimaru wound up setting up was like a hybrid of the Konoha Academy and Root. On one hand, it was a mix of a conventional school system with chakra and combat training. On the other hand&#124; everyone had a training partner that they were supposed to work with. Officially, the reason was so that the clan children could support the orphan students, since the latter didn't have the same advantages as the former.<p>

The partner program, however, made me worry. It helped to remind me the sort of person that Orochimaru was, but it made me worry. My memory of Naruto canon was imperfect at best, but I remembered that Root paired trainees up with each other like the Unsullied were paired up with puppies.

My partner, though&#124; he was a child, my age if not younger. He had messy blonde hair, hazel eyes&#124; he could've been a by-blow off the Yamanakas. Either that or he could've been an abductee. Whatever he was, he certainly wasn't a blood relation to the man with dark hair and eyes who was bringing him to the Oto Shinobi Academy, which totally wasn't an underground lab with non-gloomy colors and better lighting.

"So, this is Kusemaru's orphan partner?" The dark haired man sneered down at me, but he was addressing the Academy's instructor.

She was a round-faced kunoichi who seemed vaguely familiar, but I couldn't place where I'd seen her before. She wore the same outfit as Orochimaru's Oto-sensei disguise from the Chunin Exam Preliminaries, although it took me a moment to recognize it. It was basically a

midnight blue body suit and a slate gray Chunin vest.

She was also ready to take exactly zero fucks from this guy. "Yes, he's Kusemaru's partner. Get over it! Do you have any idea how many clan shinobi I've heard complaining about this partner program because they think that being stuck with an orphan is going to hold them back?"

"I was made to understand that that the point of the program was to help the orphans." Mister Sneer hadn't taken his eyes off me. For my part, I looked toward my partner, who gave an apologetic smile. This, unfortunately, earned him a smack upside the head. "I fail to see what Kusemaru, or any child of the Kiaino clan, has to gain from it."

Retail Worker Sensei glanced up as she started counting things Kusemaru had to gain off on her fingers. "A loyal ally, respect for the clan from outsiders, a way to check to make sure they understand what they're studying, someone to spar with-

The elder Kiaino scoffed at the last one. "What does Kusemaru have to gain from sparring with a brat who's never even used chakra?"

Alright, that warranted a retort. I used chakra to make a small orb of light on the tip of my middle finger, which I extended from my fist as I held it up for my critic to see. He looked surprised, at least at first, but then he narrowed his eyes and

I was going to die.

This man was going to kill me, and I couldn't think of anything I could do to stop it. All I could think about was how he was going to kill me. Every moment, I could see him pulling out a kunai and stabbing me, could see nothing but that. Feel nothing but that. The pain alone was more horrible than anything I'd experienced in either lifetime.

And then, it was over.

Retail Rage Sensei was standing where Kiaino had been, a fist extended toward a door that had been shut a moment ago. Kusemaru was idly pulling me upright, since apparently I'd fallen to my knees at some point, but he was also staring at our teacher with naked horror on his face. Woozily, I gripped his shoulder and struggled to pull myself upright.

"I think I'm going to like it here." My mouth tasted kind of stingy and gross. I glanced down, and yep. "Once I get the taste of sick out of my mouth, anyway."

Retail Rage Sensei smirked in satisfaction, but she didn't look toward us until a pained groan came from the other side of the doorway. "Kiaino Kusemaru, you're partnered with Sakebi here. I'm Unmei-sensei, and I'll be in charge of you two and a couple dozen other brats for the next couple of years. This room we're in is going to be the quarters for the both of you. Do either of you need to learn how to read?"

Kusemaru shook his head, and he would've said something, but I got my



hand up first. Unmei-sensei nodded in satisfaction at that.

"Kusemaru, I expect you to help Sabeki with his written work until he learns how to read and write for himself. That, and teach him how to read the map on the wall. It has your class schedule on it in the corner."

Unmei-sensei pointed, and we looked at what looked to be a rather complex map. Kusemaru would need to read it to me, but there was no way a normal kid his age would comprehend it without assistance. Oto was going to need to be festooned with geniuses for this system to be workable.

I took the pause in the lecture to wipe my mouth on my sleeve. Yuck.

"Any questions, or can I move on to dragging Kiaino-san off to the iryo nin?"

Kusemaru looked at me, and I shook my head. The map and the schedule covered most of everything I'd need, and from I saw our quarters had all the essential amenities. I'd probably head to the bathroom to clean up once we were done here.

Kusemaru nodded, and then turned toward Unmei-sensei. "No questions, sensei."

What.

Kusemaru sounded just like Wesley Crusher.

What was this how the what.

Something was poking me in the forehead. I blinked, and looked up at Unmei-sensei.

Well, this certainly promised to be awkward. She frowned a bit, and then went through a few hand signs and shoved an itchy green glow in my face. "Sabeki-kun?"

I waved at her hands, which got a frown, but it also got her to step back. "He sounded like someone I remember. From my home."

It was true enough that whatever lie detection training wouldn't ping it, and provided a decent excuse not to discuss the matter further. At least, I wouldn't have to explain it if she'd been briefed. Judging by the nod, though, she knew about how Orochimaru had found me. "That reminds me. Kusemaru, Sabeki's village got killed by Kumo shinobi that were raiding. If he says he doesn't want to talk about something relating to that, then he doesn't have to talk about it."

With that, she marched out the door, stopping to pick up the pile of angry idiot outside. "Last thing I need to deal with are brats crying when I haven't even started hitting them yet."

I was suddenly less enthusiastic to study at the Oto Shinobi Academy.

Judging by the look on Kusemaru's face, he wasn't a fan of Unmei-sensei's implied teaching methods, either. And unlike me, he

had all the composure of a child his age, soâ€¦ distraction.  
"Kusemaru-san? What does the schedule say?"

"Ah!" He startled, looking at me in bewilderment before he hustled over to the map. Thankfully for both of us, he was mindful of the mess I'd made. "Ummâ€¦ it says our lessons don't start until tomorrow. I think we just have free time? I'm going to practice my music."

Of course an Oto nin would pursue music for a hobby. I nodded before I jerked a thumb toward the bathroom. "I'll clean up the mess I made while you do that."

The bathroom was decently stocked. It was downright modern, to the point that there were even electric sockets. Made me wonder what sort of power plants they used. Well, aside from the power plants being well-guarded.

My idle curiosity was cut short by the need to rinse my mouth out, and the faucet was more than sufficient to accommodate me. With that done, I turned my attention to figuring out how to clean up the vomit. The trash bin was wicker, but lined with a plastic bag. I checked, and was relieve to find that there weren't any holes. Now I just needed to find something to get the vomit from the floor into the bag.

As the music started playing, I looked out of the bathroom to see what sort of instrument it was, and got myâ€¦ third shock of the day. The blonde boy was playing an ocarina. Just like the blonde boy with amnesia from that one Naruto filler. I couldn't remember the character's name, but he'd had amnesia so he hadn't remembered either. Narutoâ€¦ probably would've named him after a ramen ingredient, but I didn't know any.

â€¦If the writers of the show had made an Ocarina of Thyme joke that went over everyone's head, I was going to have to find \_someone\_ to punch.

Apparently I'd smiled at the horrific pun, due to horrific puns being the best puns, judging by how Kusemaru smiled when he noticed my attention. "You like it? The adults in my clan say I need to get better before I can use the music for jutsu."

"It reminded me of happier times." He frowned at that. Why- oh, \_shit\_. I waved my free hand frantically. "In a good way! In a good way. You can keep practicing; I just need to find something to scoop the mess into the bag."

He nodded and went to start playing again, but then he stopped. Setting the ocarina aside, he went through his bag and pulled outâ€¦ well. No wooden training kunai for Oto nin, if Kusemaru's kit was any indicator. He held the weapon out for me, holding the handle but pointing the ring my way. "Would this work?"

I grabbed the weapon by the ring, switching to the handle after he'd let it go. It could certainly scrape down to the stone floor, but without a concave sectionâ€¦ maybe two? No, I'd need both hands for the kunai, and that left me with nothing to hold the bag open. Kusemaru might be willing to help at \_first\_, but if past experience was any indicator most people didn't have the stomach for cleaning up

vomit.

"What are you brats doing?"

Kusemaru and I both looked toward the doorway to see a Faceless Invasion Mook with cleaning supplies.

Well, that certainly made my day easier.

It gave me time to figure out how to not kill Kusemaru when graduation rolled around, at least.

\* \* \*

><p>The actually training schedule, as it turned out, varied between monotonous and torturous. On the monotonous side of things was conventional education, where the only things I would actually <em>learn</em> were history and literacy. I did have to admit; at least they were useful subjects to learn.

As it turned out, a couple years ago Hokori-sama had tried to send the shinobi clans of the land into the Land of Hot Water with a mind for conquest after their hidden village had been disbanded and, afterward, wiped out. Unfortunately for all involved, the reason for this was due to Kumo trying to secure their influence over one of the political buffers that had allowed them to pursue offensives with ease during the previous Shinobi Wars.

So, a bunch of disorganized clans with Warring States mindsets went into the Land of Hot Water looking for easy pickings and got a face full of katana-wielding war veterans. Now, Kumo was taking out their frustration over losing a high ranking shinobi to a diplomatic incident in Konoha that totally wasn't a squandered kidnapping.

Unmei-sensei made sure to include the sarcasm in that part of the explanation.

The torturous parts were taijutsu and the chakra exercises. Taijutsu was torture because everyone was magically more physically fit than me. It hadn't been until I'd gotten the explanation of the chakra exercises that I found out that how to enhance by body passively with chakra. After which point, I'd start kicking everyone's butts, which lead to everyone hating me and working that much harder to kick my butt.

The worst part, though, were the chakra exercises.

Apparently, building up immunity to a particular poison was too expensive as applied to a single shinobi. Compound on that the sheer variety of poisons that had been developed, and how overdoses of medicine could function as poison if need be? Immunization couldn't come from exposure alone. No, the best option was to develop a sort of internal medical technique to purge the unwanted substance internally. Or externally, if one anticipated they'd be consuming poison like alcohol in sake.

Poison resistance exercises for children did not involve sake, as much as everyone involved would have preferred otherwise. It did involve drinking, though. They were drinks which, due to their

contents, tasted horrible more often than not. After all, it was better if we could recognize the taste of the poison so we could purge it before it started to hurt us.

This was not a field where I excelled.

There were two forms of training that could be said to be truly interesting, though. Granted, they were interesting in a 'bounces between boring and torture' sort of way, but it counted. The first of these was specialty training. The clan kids would work on clan techniques with older family members, while orphans with special talents honed their innate abilities with older experts in their field. Most of the orphans, though, got to play with experimental weapons technology.

I got sensor training.

This involved, among other things, sparing with Unmei-sensei while wearing a blindfold.

If the flak jacket hadn't made it obvious, she could easily kick my ass even without the blindfold. With the blindfold, the sparing matches were more of a case of desperately trying to minimize my injuries until she got bored of smacking me around.

Thankfully, Kabuto had been recruited by this point, so the one-sided beatings meant spending plenty of time on one of the medical cots in his personal lab rather than suffering any sort of lasting injury. Admittedly the lesser of two evils, but he hadn't even started puberty yet, so he wasn't a completely horrible bastard yet. He wasâ€|

"I wouldn't need to heal you so often if you didn't suck so much at taijutsu."

Tactless. He was tactless, that was what he was. I would've rolled my eyes at him, but I was still blindfolded. So, I settled for scoffing. "You don't think that the blindfold is holding me back more than my taijutsu?"

"I think your being an idiot is holding you back more than anything else." As Kabuto continued to insult me, he turned his attention from the cut on my arm that he'd finished healing to some sort of blunt injury along my cheekbone. The medical jutsu felt weird thanks to my sensory abilities, like the tissue being treated was somehow thicker than it ought to be. "Although, I do think that the blindfold shouldn't be holding you back that much."

"Oh, I can't wait to hear this logic."

"You can't?" Kabuto paused in healing the bruise â€" definitely a bruise â€" and looked toward me expectantly. Did he not get sarcasm? No, he was smiling, he was just a dick. "Why not?"

Well, he wasn't the only one who could be a dick. "Because I have a limited supply of patience, and I'm wasting most of it on putting up with you being an ass, Kabuto-san."

Kabuto smiled. This was never a good thing. "You know, I'm only volunteering to provide medical attention to injured students. I

don't \_have\_ to heal you."

I did not know that. "I'll be good!"

"Good." Kabuto nodded in satisfaction, and resumed healing me. After a few seconds, the grin came back to his face. "It seems you can wait."

I would've nodded, but he still wasn't quite done with my face. As it turned out, the level of precision needed for medical jutsu meant that a patient had to hold \_really fucking still\_ in order to avoid complicating the treatment. If it hadn't been safe for me to talk, though, he would've said something, soâ€¦ "When properly motivated."

"Heh. Funny, Sakebi-kun. Your problem is that you aren't training as often as you could be." I gave him as quizzical of a look as I could manage while holding still. He took a moment to pause in his healing, which gave me an opportunity to give him a properly confused gaze. "Alright, let me put it like this. How much time do you spend training taijutsu."

"An hour a day. Well, two if you count specialty training, but by that logic my sensorâ€¦" Oh. By that logic, I'd be training as a sensor from the moment I woke up to the moment I fell asleep. I grabbed the pillow out from under my head and held it over my face. "Pardon me while I hide from my shame."

"Not in my lab, you're not." The words were followed by an ominous chuckle. I could feel Kabuto start to loom over me, and I peeked over the edge of the pillow. "Unless you want to help me with my experiments?"

I grumbled a moment before I shoved the pillow in his face. It was a halfhearted effort, so he was able to grab it away from me easily enough, but I noticed a brief flare of chakra as he was momentarily put on edge. Man, some ninja were \_twitchy\_. "I doubt I have the medical skill to be very helpful with anything \_you\_ would experiment with."

"Heh, that's a good point. Now, get out of here, Sakebi-kun." Kabuto playfully-but-not grabbed my shoulder and pulled me out of the cot. As I staggered upright, I rolled with the motion to begin walking toward the exit. No need to tell me twice. "And don't forget your sensory training!"

I flipped him off, because that gesture was totally a thing here if the sorer losers in my taijutsu class were any indicator. I felt him move in response, and ducked just in time for the pillow to fly over my head out the door. I glanced over my shoulder, smirking at Kabuto while still giving him the finger. "Like that, Kabuto-san?"

\* \* \*

><p>The next day, my schedule had dual specialty training, with the science class replaced by medic training.<p>

Seriously, \_fuck\_ Kabuto.

End  
file.